



## MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF MARINE RESOURCES

1141 Bayview Avenue, Biloxi, Mississippi 39530

# News Release

Contact: Melissa Scallan

Phone: 228-523-4124

15-20-MMS  
April 3, 2015

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### ***Celebrate the Gulf to be held April 11***

BILOXI, Miss. – The 24<sup>th</sup> annual Celebrate the Gulf Marine Education Festival will be held Saturday, April 11, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at War Memorial Park in Pass Christian. This fun and educational event features activities for the whole family and includes hands-on exhibits that teach the benefits of a healthy Gulf of Mexico.

“MDMR is proud to sponsor this year’s Celebrate the Gulf, an event focused on educating our youth about marine life and the environment,” said Jamie Miller, executive director of the Mississippi Department of Marine Resources. “I invite families to come and learn more about our incredible coastal resources and how to protect them.”

The Coastal Conservation Association kicks off the day’s events at 8 a.m. with a junior catch-and-release fishing rodeo for children 12 and under. Boat rides on the Biloxi Schooner and USM Boat begin at 10 a.m. and are on a first-come, first-served basis. The rides are free and last from 60 to 90 minutes. Between 40 and 65 people will be allowed on the boats on each trip.

Those interested in the first boat ride should park near the West Harbor behind Shaggy’s. People can sign up for the other scheduled rides at the festival.

“This year Celebrate the Gulf is going to be bigger and better than ever,” said Jennifer Buchanan, education coordinator for the MDMR’s Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, “Due to our generous sponsors, we are bringing back the schooner rides, research vessel excursions and our Raptor Road Show in addition to over 25 hands-on exhibits. Make sure you get to the festival early to sign up for the limited number of boat rides.”

This year’s exhibitors include: Mississippi Department of Marine Resources; City of Pass Christian Code Office; Pass Christian Library; Mississippi Wildlife Federation; Rotten Bayou Watershed Partnership; Mississippi Coast Fly Fishers; Institute for Marine Mammal Studies; Lynn Meadows Discovery Center; Wildlife Care and Rescue; The Nature Conservancy; Grand Bay NERR; Mississippi Forestry Commission; EPA Gulf of Mexico Program; NOAA Fisheries; Mississippi Power; Wolf River Conservation Society; INFINITY Science Center; USM Gulf Coast Research Lab and Thad Cochran Center for Marine Aquaculture; Mississippi Department of Wildlife and Parks; Audubon Mississippi Coastal Bird Stewardship Program; Pascagoula River Audubon Center; Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality.

For the first time in Celebrate the Gulf history, festival coordinators held a poster contest. Henry Stiller of Long Beach won the contest, and he will be at the festival signing posters, which are free.

Celebrate the Gulf is held in conjunction with Art in the Pass, which also will take place at War Memorial Park. Art in the Pass is on April 11-12 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. That festival is celebrating its 18<sup>th</sup> year and will feature more than 100 exhibiting artists.

The two festivals this year sponsored a children's coloring contest for students in Kindergarten through eighth grades. Students submitted artwork depicting the conservation or scenic qualities of Mississippi's coastal resources. Students were divided into four divisions based on their grade level, and the winner in each division will receive tickets to a local family attraction.

Celebrate the Gulf sponsors are MDMR, Grand Bay NERR, Mississippi Power, City of Pass Christian, Chevron Pascagoula Refinery, Gulf of Mexico Program, CCA of Mississippi and DuPont.



**Photo credit: Mississippi Department of Marine Resources**

**Jessica Rankin with MDMR's Seafood Technology Bureau talks to children about turtles during the 2014 Celebrate the Gulf Marine Education Festival.**

The Mississippi Department of Marine Resources is dedicated to enhancing, protecting and conserving marine interests of the state by managing all marine life, public trust wetlands, adjacent uplands and waterfront areas to provide for the optimal commercial, recreational, educational and economic uses of these resources consistent with environmental concerns and social changes. Visit the DMR online at [www.dmr.ms.gov](http://www.dmr.ms.gov).

—END—